

To Whom It May Concern:

A public "Open House" will be conducted on June 3, 2008 at 7:00 pm at the Boise Foothills Learning Center, at 3188 Sunset Peak Road, in Boise off of 8th Street (see link for directions below). The meeting will be held to discuss potential issues associated with a proposal to treat and restore vegetation, reducing erosion and enhancing mule deer habitat, in the Boise Foothills. The proposal is currently being developed for approximately 44,000 acres in the Boise Foothills (see attached map). Potential issues concerned with treatment options could include prescribed fires, herbicide application, variable restoration methods, and temporary access and area closures.

Your input will be summarized and used in association with the development of alternatives addressed in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for this proposed project. This will be an open forum so please feel free to pass this invitation on. A public announcement will be issued in the Idaho Statesman and Boise Weekly prior to the meeting. An additional public scoping meeting will follow the development and assessment of the alternatives identified for the project, and there will be a 30 day public review period of the completed draft EA.

Driving directions to the Learning Center:

<http://www.cityofboise.org/Departments/Parks/ParksAndFacilities/Parks/page19817.aspx>

Overview

Environmental Conservation Services (ECS Inc.), a locally owned and operated consulting firm, has been contracted by the Southern Idaho Resource and Conservation District (RC&D) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to conduct an EA on approximately 44,000 acres in the Boise Foothills. The purpose of this EA is to assess the impacts of proposed future treatment program that would be developed to help protect and enhance areas in the foothills that are currently considered high risk to wildfire disturbance. Management concerns related to the area and the EA include, but are not limited to, introduction and spread of invasive and noxious weeds, loss of native vegetation, soil erosion, and reduced viability of winter mule deer habitat.

Need for and Purpose of Proposed Action

Between 1957 and 2006, wildfires burned approximately 37,600 acres (75%) of the area between Bogus Basin Road and Lucky Peak Reservoir with approximately 52% of that having burned two or more times. Vegetation in burned areas has changed from deep-rooted perennial plants that stabilize soils and provided habitat for wintering mule deer to shallow-rooted annual plants that provide minimal stabilization or habitat. About 5,000 acres in the Foothills are currently dominated by annuals, but bitterbrush, an important food for mule deer, is absent from a large area.

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The Four Rivers Field Office (FRFO) proposes to maintain, improve and restore healthy vegetation in the Boise Foothills Project Area to minimize the effects of wildland fires, and to evaluate the effectiveness of various treatments in meeting these objectives.

Project Area

The project area is approximately 44,000 acres and is located in portions of northern Ada County and southwest Boise County, Idaho, partially encompassed by and adjacent to the City of Boise, in the east portion of the Boise Foothills. The project boundaries are roughly defined by the west rim of Lucky Peak Lake canyon to the south, Warmsprings Avenue to the west, Bogus Basin Road to the north, and Boise Ridge Road to the east extending to the canyon of Lucky Peak Lake.

The Foothills are characterized as a transition between the valley floor, recognized by the arid lowlands surrounding the verdant ribbon of the Boise River, and the coniferous peaks of the Boise ridge. Indigenous vegetation includes bunchgrasses and sagebrush, interspersed with ribbons of riparian vegetation in drainages. Elevations of the project area range from approximately 2,650 to 6,950 feet. The topography of the project area ranges from little topographical relief near the city limits to moderately and severely steep slopes. The topography of the Boise Front is a result of several main drainages, including Dry Creek, Stewart Gulch, Hull's Gulch, and Maynard Gulch, and their tributaries.

Public involvement and comment is an essential part the process. Identifying areas important to you, areas you think need management changes, or areas you think should be left alone. For your convenience a brief description of access points to view the project area are listed below. There are several trails and roads available throughout the area. Please take this opportunity to explore the project area.

Individual Tour of Foothills Project Area (Vehicle Access)

A map of the project area and tour has been attached. This is an individual driving tour; however, there are also points that have been identified that can be reached by hiking or bike. While all the areas identified have public access, we ask that you respect the rules of the trails and the rights of adjacent private property owners.

Western Boundary- Access to the northern section of the project area begins by driving up Bogus Basin Road from the intersection with Hill Road. Everything located on the east of Bogus Basin Road approximately 8 miles to the Boise Forest sign is within the project area. From the sign most lands in view from to the east to the ridge line of the Boise Front, with exception of forested lands owned and operated by the Forest Service falls within the project area.

Central Access-8th Street Extension: The center of the project area can be viewed by driving up 8th Street extension from Halls Gulch Reserve. The project area includes lands on both sides of the road approximately 7 to 8 miles up to the boundary with Forest Service Lands near the road that runs along the ridge of the Boise Front.

- Rocky Canyon Road: Additional driving access to the central section of the project area begins from Military Reserve area, heading up Shaw Mountain Road to Rocky Canyon. This road bisects the project area to the eastern boundary at Aldalpe Summit with its intersection with the ridge road.
- Table Rock Road: From Shaw Mountain Road, turn right onto Table Rock Road and proceed to the top of Table Rock. All lands surrounding Table Rock to Warmsprings Avenue and up to the ridge are included in the project area.

Southern Access-The southern boundary of the project area is delineated by Warmsprings Avenue and State Highway 21 (SH21). From Broadway Avenue, turn east onto Warmsprings Avenue. All lands to the east of Warmsprings to the ridge of the Boise Front are included in the project area. Continue on Warmsprings Avenue to the intersection with SH21, turn east on SH21 toward Lucky Peak Lake, the lands to the east of the highway are included in the project area.

Eastern Access-Continue out SH21 to Lucky Peak Dam. From Lucky Peak Dam all the lands to the west of the highway are included in the project area as well as the land to the east between the highway and the edge of Lucky Peak Reservoir. The boundary of the project area is located approximately one mile prior to the bridge across the lake.


More detailed access to the project area can be obtained by several recreation access points that use the Ridge to Rivers trail system. Several primary access points that give views of and allow closer connection to the area include: Corrals Trail; Hulls Gulch Trails; Table Rock Trails; Rocky Canyon Trails; and Homestead Trail. Please ride or walk responsibly.

Please send any written comments to:

Environmental Conservation Services
5220 N. Sawyer Ave. Suite A
Garden City, Idaho 83714

Send your comments via e-mail to:
foothillsea@ecs-services.com

Sincerely,
Environmental Conservation Services Inc.



Charles Baun: Lead Ecologist/ Principal